



Maine Historical Society

In commemoration of the millenary
anniversary of the death of King
Alfred the Great

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Alfred the Great, King of England

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In Commemoration of the Millenary Anniversary of the
Death of King Alfred the Great,
November 12, 1901

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NO. 000000407

KING ALFRED MEMORIAL

OPENING ADDRESS

BY HON. JAMES PHINNEY BAXTER, PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY

It has been the practice from the earliest times for civilized peoples to publicly commemorate important episodes in the lives of those who have made themselves conspicuous by great achievements, not alone for the purpose of showing reverence for the mighty dead, but for the loftier one of keeping bright the memory of virtues worthy to be emulated by the living.

It is in accordance with this practice that we have assembled to celebrate the nativity of a man so grand, that the memory of what he wrought for a great race from whose loins we sprang, has survived the mirk and moil of a thousand years. A thousand years! How fared the world in that remote day when Alfred, the anniversary of whose death we commemorate, opened his eyes upon it? Surely it was not the world upon which we look to-day. Then, the activities of men were universally devoted to war, and an able warrior stood for the highest type of manhood. Race strove with race and tribe with tribe marring the face of nature with carnage and desolation. To wrest their dearest possessions from alien peoples and devote them to servitude and sorrow, was a meritorious

achievement worthy the meed of poetic eulogy, and the precious crown of heroic virtue. At the time of Alfred's birth, the little island of England was divided into petty principalities governed by rulers, who were jealous of each other, and who acted together against the common enemy, the Danes, only as their selfish interests dictated. These fierce sea rovers made annual incursions into the country, first despoiling the sea coast towns and then ascending the water ways into the interior, ravaging and slaying as they went. There was no part of England which was not kept in continual alarm by these raids of a cruel and implacable enemy, whose sudden appearance in unexpected places, prevented the people from making common cause against them, as they dared not leave their own settlements unprotected. Emboldened by success, these marauders swarmed together and established themselves permanently on the soil, which enabled them more successfully to prosecute their designs. Continual warfare and slaughter was the result, and for a long time it seemed that the English people were doomed to destruction. In this condition of affairs the childhood and youth of Alfred were passed. Brave, prudent and sincere, he was the favorite of all.

Says Asser, his friend and biographer, "Beloved was he by both father and mother alike with a great affection beyond all his brothers ; yea, the very darling of all. It was in the king's court that he was brought up. As he grew both in childhood and boyhood, so showed he ever fairer than his brethren, and, in looks

and words and ways, the lovesomest. Above all, from his very cradle and through all the distractions of this present life, his own noble temper and his high birth absorbed in him a longing after wisdom."

When his father and three brothers had died after enjoying brief reigns, the last having been slain in battle, the advent of Alfred to the throne revived in the hearts of the English people a hope of deliverance from their pitiless oppressors. Though often reduced to almost hopeless conditions, his confidence in achieving success never waned, and overcoming all obstacles he finally conquered the Danes, established order and placed England in a position of security not hitherto enjoyed. This alone would have entitled him to the term great, but it satisfied only a part of the worthy ambition which he cherished. Long continued warfare had seriously interfered with the proper administration of law, and education, and literature. As soon as peace was won the great warrior became a law-giver, and reconstructed the legal code of his realm, at the same time devoting himself to education and literature. As a man of letters Jusserand calls him, "The chief promoter of the art of prose," and another French writer, Guizot, says that "He opened to the Anglo-Saxon tongue itself a new era by impenetrating it with strong thoughts and precise notions, which it was not yet accustomed to bear. Therein is the original work of Alfred, the seal of his genius." Well has Alfred been called a Miltiades for military genius, a Themistocles for statesmanship, and a Pericles for humanity and wisdom.

We to-day honor Alfred not because he was a king, or a successful ruler of a great people, but as a wise and noble man, worthy of universal honor in any age ; in fact, a man whom every American, however high his ideal, may imitate with profit.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF KING ALFRED

BY PROFESSOR J. WILLIAM BLACK, PH.D., COLBY COLLEGE

In September of this year there gathered in Winchester, England, distinguished people from all parts of the English-speaking world, bent upon one object,—that of doing honor to the memory of a great man. Just one thousand years ago death put an end to the reign of King Alfred, a reign so full of fruitage and marked by many achievements so important for the future of England and the Anglo-Saxon race. Men of letters, representatives of the great universities, were there from Great Britain and Ireland; Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, America joined with the British Empire in paying homage to the memory of this man and in taking part in the unveiling of Thornycroft's majestic bronze statue of King Alfred.

Our own country is comparatively young and is not so enriched with historic traditions as the countries of the old world. But our people belong to a race that is as old as Europe itself. The ancestors of Alfred are our ancestors. Their institutions are our institutions. And community of interests and historic traditions demand that we remember in this fitting celebration the best type of our race.

The Saxon conquest of Britain in the fifth century was a first step in the westward migration of the English from the shores of Germany. The English conquest of North America in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries was a second step in this movement, and in America find the English in their third home. We still have much to learn from the past and about the past. It is a strong incentive to historical research to know that the records of the past have not all been revealed. We are learning more to-day of the ancients than they knew of themselves. Egypt, Assyria, Rome are arising anew in the clearer light of historical truth and revealing facts that the world has not hitherto known. It is the same with our own history. It is safe to say that Alfred and his work are better understood to-day than they ever were before. The real Alfred is a different thing from the mythical Alfred. The pioneer efforts of the Saxon are better understood in the light of to-day than by the contemporaries of the Saxon king himself. Let us, therefore, endeavor to put before our minds the true Alfred and profit by his example to the race.

Prior to the time of Alfred, England lacked national unity. Before the migration of the English to Britain they had only a tribal organization. They had not the conception of a nation, nor did they know even the name of king. It was this government that the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes brought with them from Germany at the time of the English conquest in the fifth century. Crowding back the native population (the Britons), they occupied the land and established many independent kingdoms. Their conquest was complete.

In time there were three of these English kingdoms that acquired especial prominence: Northumbria in

the north ; Mercia occupying the center of England, and Wessex in the south. A struggle for supremacy was inevitable, and the work of national consolidation began. A powerful ally in this effort was the English church, which was firmly established as a part of the great continental church of Rome at the Council of Whitby, 664.

The Gewissas, who settled in southern England and founded Wessex, the kingdom of the West Saxons, had chosen their home wisely,—a country compact in area, well fortified by nature, studded with woodland and stream, easily protected against the invader ; withal a good foundation for the work of national consolidation. Winchester, occupying the geographical center of this region, and easily accessible from all parts of Wessex, was likewise its logical capital. The river Thames was a barrier on the north which fortified the West Saxons against their Mercian and Northumbrian kinsmen of that region.

By the time of Egbert, or in any event before his death in 839, the king of Wessex became the overlord of all the various English kingdoms in Britain. He was the last of the so-called “ Bretwaldas ”¹ before the coming of the Danes. Though Egbert has sometimes been called the king of all England, he never deserved such a title. The national federation of the English kingdoms — Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia and Northumberland—was of the loosest sort, each having its own ruler, Egbert being merely recognized as an over-lord. Egbert, however,

¹ See Stubbs' *Constitutional History of England*, vol. I, 180, 181

was a vigorous ruler and was fortunate in his successors of the West Saxon line. They gave the country good government and hastened the establishment of a national kingdom. In this they were aided and encouraged by the clergy, who saw in national unity, under a powerful sovereign, likewise a national church protected and sustained by the state.

But let us remember that Egbert, though his overlordship was generally recognized, had not become king of England. It was reserved for Alfred to become the first king of the English, but he was not the ruler of all England at that. Nevertheless, the work that Alfred did made it possible for his descendant, Eadred, in 954, to assume the crown of all England and to become the first national king.

While the overlordship of Egbert was the first step in the progress toward national unity, pressure from the outside completed, in a measure, the work already begun within. The Northmen, or Danes, furnished this pressure. The sea rovers of the north began to infest the shores of Britain before the time of Egbert, as early as 787. However, it was in the time of this king (802-839), the grandfather of Alfred, that their attacks became persistent, and the attention and energy of Wessex must be turned from the problem of national consolidation to that of the defence of their kingdom against a foreign foe.

Northumbria, East Anglia and Mercia had been overthrown by the Danes and all with comparative ease. Of all the old English kingdoms, Wessex alone retained her independence. Upon her now fell the

brunt of preserving England for the Anglo-Saxon. Was she equal to the task? Let us see.

In the church the Saxon found an able ally. Indeed, the work of national consolidation was really begun by the church. As early as the seventh century Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus, introduced an ecclesiastical administrative system that covered the whole of England and assembled, in 673, at Hertford, the first general English church council. His work on behalf of unity in the church prepared the way for a united English nation. Just as the church on the continent furnished a powerful agent in overcoming the decentralizing tendencies of feudalism, so did the Roman church in Great Britain solidify the people. The state profited by the organization and the example of the church.

Now the Dane came as a foe to both, aiming on the one hand to overthrow the political power; on the other hand, offering his heathen gods — Wodan and Thor — in the place of Christ. The Dane exacted tribute of the people of Northumbria and Mercia, and the tribute was paid. The over-lordship, established by Egbert, was undone. The Dane now approached the Thames. He looked for an easy conquest of the south. It seemed now as if nothing could prevent a change of leadership and of nationality.

In the year 871, the Danes appeared upon the Thames under a new leader, Guthrum. They went up the river west of London and placed their camp at Reading. In the region of Berkshire, and to the northwest of the Danish camp, lies the town of

Wantage (just a few miles southwest of Oxford). It was one of the little sparsely settled village communities of the Saxons and was designated by Alfred's biographer, Asser, as the "royal village of Wanating."¹ Here Alfred was born in 849. He was the fifth and youngest son of Ethelwulf and Osburh. Very little is known of his early years, and much of what is known is obscured in the veil of myth. His biographer traces his descent in direct line from Adam and Wodan. Doubtless Alfred came of a staunch family of noble blood. We know little more than this of his ancestry. We are told that in his fifth year he went to Rome, where he was "anointed for king" by Pope Leo IV and "adopted as his spiritual son"; further, that at the age of six he was taken by his father from Rome to the court of Charles the Bald at Verberie, northern France, where he spent three months and then returned to England. It is said that his experiences at Rome and at the Frankish court made upon the boy a great and permanent impression, which profoundly affected his subsequent life. It is a strain upon the imagination to accept this statement, though, without a doubt, Alfred was a precocious youth.

Nevertheless, this boyhood experience is said to account for the cosmopolitan and international spirit of King Alfred, his freedom from insular narrowness, and his deep interest in the brotherhood of man and of nations.

As a manifestation of an early love of letters, his biographer gives us this story. His mother one day

¹ Asser's *Life of Alfred*, in Giles' *Six Old English Chronicles* (Bohn), p. 48.

was showing an illuminated Saxon book of poems to her boys, and remarked "Whichever of you shall the soonest learn this volume, shall have it for his own."¹ The beauty of its letters pleased the eye of Alfred. He took the book to his master, learned to recite it promptly, then came to his mother, repeated the poems, and won the coveted prize. While this story is improbable, for we know that Alfred could not have been over four years of age at the time of this incident, and from other evidence that we have, the story is found to be inconsistent with the facts, nevertheless it may be true in spirit in that it signalized in the young man an ardent love of learning and an enmity for ignorance which had such important consequences in his later years.

Alfred married at the early age of nineteen. He seems to have been afflicted with some mysterious disease which burdened him to the end of his days, but as to its real nature we are left to conjecture. Alfred's rearing was amid stormy times in the history of his people. Evidence enough of this we find in the fact that, though he was the fifth son, and his father and three of his brothers had preceded him on the throne, the crown was placed upon his head when he was but twenty-two years of age. He had already served several years in the army and had learned the art of war under his brother, King Ethelred.

That the Saxons were aiming at national unity is further evident from the fact that marriage alliances were negotiated with that end in view. Alfred's sister

¹ Asser, 51.

had married one of the Gainas of the kingdom of Mercia, and by and by he marries his own daughter to a Mercian, Ethelred, whom he placed as alderman (chieftain) over the Mercians.

We return to the Danes at their camp at Reading, on the upper Thames, where they were now preparing for the subjugation of the last of the English kingdoms. The West Saxons attacked the Danish camp, but were defeated and forced to retire up the valley of the Thames to the heart of their country. Again the Saxons met the pagans, as they preferred to call the Danes, at Ashdown, and here the pagans had the advantage of higher ground and the better position. While King Ethelred and his brother Alfred were arrayed against them, the brunt of the battle fell upon Alfred. He assumed the offensive and charged the Danes. Ethelred delayed his forward movement until he had finished the mass. He refused to "abandon the divine protection for that of men." God was on the side of the Saxons and they won the day. The Danes fell back upon their rallying point at Reading. Ethelred, having been mortally wounded in this conflict, "went the way of all flesh," and was succeeded at once by Alfred (871).¹

Meanwhile fresh swarms of the Danes were coming up the Thames to reinforce their comrades, and a portion of them penetrated into the heart of the West Saxon territory and camped at Wilton. Alfred was now outnumbered and was compelled to resort to the disgraceful proceeding of buying peace from the

¹ Asser, 56.

invaders. This hour of humiliation was a dark one for Alfred and his people. The Danes let Wessex alone for a while, but Alfred well knew that a peace secured on such terms could not be a lasting one. He was right.

The Danes were simply gathering their forces for another and final struggle. They now organized in two sections. One of these was sent against the north of England and the other and most important, under their leader Guthrum, was preparing at Cambridge for an assault upon Wessex. In 876, Guthrum began his expedition. He embarked in a number of vessels and sailed around to the southern coast of Wessex to Dorsetshire. They landed at Wareham. Alfred, too weak to meet them in battle, again purchased peace, and the Danes swore by all the relics that they would at once leave his kingdom.

Again the pagans proved faithless to their vows, and we next find a number of them coming down from the north and occupying Exeter, on the extreme western border of Essex. But the Saxons, rallying their forces, compelled the Danes to surrender at Exeter and again to agree to leave the country. The latter retired to the north, up the valley of the Severn, but only for a brief respite. After a few months spent at Gloucester, they swooped down upon the Saxons again, occupying the heart of their kingdom, in the region of Chippenham, and terrorizing the whole country. The efforts of their land forces were ably seconded by a Danish fleet of twenty-three ships, which operated in the British channel upon the coast of Devonshire.

Alfred's courage did not desert him. With a few faithful followers he now sought a quiet retreat, and as Green suggests, "waited for brighter days."¹ His retreat was at Athelney, a small island in the river Parret, a branch of the Severn, surrounded by swamps and woodland, which made it well-nigh inaccessible. Here he constructed a fortress, and in three short months made ready for the defence of his country.

Alfred was "in great tribulation."² This was his Valley Forge. He "spent an unquiet life among the woodlands," suffering even for the necessities of life; part of the time in disguise we are told, and it was during these days that Alfred staid at the home of a cowherd or swineherd of his who knew him, though Alfred was unknown to the peasant's wife. One day the woman was baking some cakes and ordered Alfred, who sat by the hearth, mending his bow and arrows, to watch them. Alfred, unmindful of his trust, allowed the cakes to burn; whereon the good housewife coming in rebuked him in the following terms:

"Ca'sn the mind the Ke-aks, man, an'

doossen zee 'em burn?

I'm boun thee's eat 'em vast enough, az

zoon az 'tiz the turn."³

or, as it is paraphrased by Freeman,

"There, don't you see the cakes on fire? Then
wherefore turn them not?

You're glad enough to eat them when they are
piping hot."⁴

¹ Green's Conquest of England, 105; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Ed. Giles), 356.

² Asser, 60.

³ Asser, 60.

⁴ Freeman's Old English History, 121, 122.

This and other improbable stories were the product of this disquieting and mysterious part of Alfred's career.

The men of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Hampshire were gathered together by their aldermen, and in the seventh week after Easter, 878, Alfred met his host at the "Stone of Egbert," on the east of the great forest Selwood. This great wood, in the extreme southwestern quarter of England, had covered the gathering of Alfred's army and "when they saw the king alive after such great tribulation," says Asser, "they received him as he deserved, with joy and acclamations."¹

Moving now upon Edington or Ethandun, Alfred met and "with divine help" defeated the enemy, compelled them to retreat to their camp at Chippenham hard by, and after a siege of fourteen days, to make a complete surrender. The surrender was unconditional and the victory a decisive one. The consequences of it were most important, for a peace, known to history as the Peace of Wedmore, was negotiated between Alfred and Guthrum. The Danes agreed, first, to leave the territory of Wessex; secondly, to embrace Christianity and receive baptism from the hands of Alfred; thirdly, to give hostages as a guarantee of good faith. Guthrum and his nobles this time fulfilled their promises, their baptism taking place a few days later at Aller, near Athelney, and the "chrism-loosing" at Wedmore.²

¹ Asser, 62.

² Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 359.

By the terms of this treaty, England was divided between the English and the Danes, the line of division being Watling street, the ancient and irregular Roman road connecting London and the southeast with Chester and the northwest of England. The valleys of the upper Thames and of the Severn, together with all southern England, remained in the hands of the English. The north and east became the Danelaw, so-called, because it was under Danish law and rule and was governed by Guthrum.

Territorially this Peace of Wedmore meant a defeat, because the English were obliged to accept the Danish occupation of considerable English territory ; but the peace had a greater significance ; the country was saved for the English and the moral victory was really Alfred's. As Charles the Hammerer had turned aside at Tours, in western France, the tide of Saracenic invasion a century and a half before and had saved Europe from an Asiatic foe and an Oriental faith, so had Alfred at this moment turned the tide of Danish invasion and had saved England from becoming pagan and the country from becoming Scandinavia. Besides, he had united his people. He had even added the western half of Mercia to his kingdom and increased its territorial base. The Mercian preferred a Saxon to a Danish rule. Moreover, Alfred had not only saved England for Christianity but had enforced the Christian religion upon the Danelaw. Further, he had broken the power of the Danes and they were obliged to give up their dream of a great Scandinavian kingdom, either in western Europe or

in Great Britain. Alfred was the instrument of the Danes' undoing.

Another fortunate result of Wedmore was the fact that the Danes, many of them, now settled down in northern and eastern England and gave up the implements of war for the implements of the farm. Those of a more adventurous turn of mind went to Iceland or to the Mediterranean, seeking new fields to conquer. Alfred, however, did not know his work was done. The sword of the invader and of the pirate still hung over his head. He did not yet believe the peace of his country secured. But Alfred was a philosopher. "Oh, what a happy man was he," he says, "that always had a naked sword hanging over his head from a small thread!" Adding, significantly, "So as to me it always yet did." "How! dost thou think now that wealth and power are pleasing, when they are never without fear, and difficulties, and sorrows? What! thou knowest that every king would wish to be without these, and yet have power, if he might; but I know that he cannot."¹

But the constant fear of a renewal of hostilities by the Danes was the making of Alfred and his kingdom. It kept him on the alert. He now prepared for future emergencies, and the results were a permanent gain for England. No one better understood the significance of the maxim "In time of peace prepare for war" than Alfred himself. Fortunate for him and his people was it that he now had a long interval of peace. He instituted reforms and put Wessex upon

Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons (Alfred's Boethius), II, 45.

a sound war footing. The country had been laid waste; buildings, churches, monasteries, destroyed. These must be renewed, confidence restored, hope revived. To replenish a depleted treasury, the time-worn expedient of debasing the currency had been resorted to, and it is to Alfred's credit and fame that he saw the necessity of a sound currency, and before the end of his reign restored the currency to a better standard.

The army, known as the fyrd, was a general levy of the male population and made up of all free land owners; in other words, a levy of the whole folk, summoned by order of the National Assembly. They came poorly equipped with staves and clubs, for arms were expensive; they could not remain in service long because they were needed at home to till the fields and gather the crops. Custom had fixed the length of service at two months. In consequence, the king had no permanent army; his force would melt away oftentimes at the moment when they were most needed.

Alfred now introduced an important innovation. The fyrd or national militia was divided into two parts, and each portion took its turn in the field, while the other, acting as a reserve force, remained at home to look after the farms and defend the boroughs. Further, the country was divided into military districts, and each five hides (500 acres) of land were required to furnish an armed man and provide him with victuals and pay.

These, together with other reforms leading to an increase in the number of thanes or wealthy

landholders, who were dependent upon the king and bound to serve him in arms when summoned, gave the king a large and permanent force for his military enterprises.

Another reform of Alfred's was the creation of a navy. Alfred saw the necessity of sea power, if he hoped permanently to defend his kingdom. He might be ever so strong on land, but until he acquired the mastery of the sea he could not protect his coast from invasion. The Saxons had no navy whatever, and among them navigation had well-nigh become a lost art. Alfred now built larger vessels than the Danes, and at first was obliged to have them manned by foreigners imported from Friesland on the continent, as there were no natives with the requisite experience. His new navy was serviceable in his own reign, in checking the raids of the Northmen, and so rapid was the naval expansion that in the time of his son and successor, Edward the Elder, the English controlled the channel. The significance of all this is that Alfred may be said to have laid the foundations of England's naval supremacy.

There is still another reform to be credited to Alfred, and that was his preparation of a common "doom-book" or code of laws. There was nothing new, however, in Alfred's laws, for they were compiled from the old laws of Kent, of Mercia, and from the laws of his Saxon ancestor, Ina. But the significant fact about it all was the creation of a national code of laws, a code no longer circumscribed by the bounds of the tribe, but valid for all the English.

Another advantage which accrued to the West Saxons as a result of Alfred's victory was this: the Danish war had put an end to the royal lines of the kingdoms of Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia. It was, therefore, now the business of Alfred to become king of the Mercians as well as of the Saxons. But right here we have an exhibition of tact on the part of Alfred which was characteristic of the man. He allowed the Mercians to retain their national assembly, called in Anglo-Saxon phraseology, the Witenagemot (assembly of the wise men), and he placed over them a ruler of their own kin, Ethelred, his own son-in-law, and gave him the title of alderman. Kent and Sussex had already lost their identity in Wessex, and in this tactful manner Mercia is likewise absorbed. Alfred is king of the English (of Jute, Saxon, and Angle). Alfred's is a real authority; Egbert's had been only a titular authority—a mere over-lordship. The signs now point to the time when the king of the English shall likewise become king of England; an event which was accomplished half a century later in the reign of Eadred (954).

If we would recall in this connection that there was a change of dynasty from English to Danish in the time of King Canute (1016-1035), and again, in 1066, from English to Norman rule, let us remember that these changes were mere changes of sovereign and had little or no effect on the unity of the kingdom or the character of the race. Indeed, the solid inheritance that Alfred left his son Edward was transmitted

ultimately to the Great Edward¹ who reigned at the close of the thirteenth century and was the first typical English king after the Norman conquest.

In the interval of peace which Alfred enjoyed between 878 and 884, and during which he was making the preparations and instituting the reforms just described, the Northmen had turned their attention to France, but with little success. Once more they bore down upon England, but Alfred's new fleet drove them off. Again they came, in larger number, up the Thames as far as Rochester, but again they were defeated, and Guthrum was punished for his co-operation in this effort. Alfred made another advance as a result of this brief struggle, for Guthrum by the terms of the "Frith" or Peace of 886 was obliged to surrender London and the western half of Essex north of the Thames. The Peace of Wedmore had left London in the hands of the Danes. Its return now to Alfred was the making of that city. The results of the "Frith" were three-fold: First, Alfred reconstructed London, and became the real founder of that city; secondly, he had secured control of the river Thames, which hitherto had been the entering wedge of the Danes; thirdly, Alfred's military activity had passed from the stage of defense to the stage of aggressiveness — another important step in the work of national consolidation.

It was the beginning of the end of the Danelaw. Henceforth the Danes are thrown upon the defensive. Green points to the year 886 as the year of the

¹ Edward I, 1272-1307.

"foundation of a national monarchy."¹ Provincial jealousies were quieted. Wessex was the only English kingdom, and Wessex had successfully withstood the Danes. Alfred was the national hope. Patriotism knit together all parts of Alfred's dominion and gave promise of greater things. Alfred had saved the English civilization. The Dane came as a destroyer; culture, art, religion, almost disappeared in the wake of his raids. Alfred came as a restorer, and right nobly did he assume the responsibility, and fulfill his mission.

Alfred's contribution to learning and letters constitutes, perhaps, his greatest monument. His efforts in this direction attest the breadth of his character and generosity of his soul, for he could appreciate a good thing, though he found it in the possession of an enemy. He gathered scholars to his court from all lands and all nationalities. He knew that to command learning, he must go abroad for it, so he invited the Franks from the continent to preside over the new monasteries that he established. Further, he drew upon his Mercian kinsmen for service in the cause of learning and education. His own biographer and court companion, Asser, was a Welshman, the arch-enemy of the English; but this circumstance in no wise prejudiced the mind of Alfred nor affected his regard for Asser.

It was Alfred's solicitude that the youth of his land should know their own tongue, and "let those," he says, "be afterwards taught in the Latin tongue who are to continue learning and be promoted to a higher

¹ Green's *Conquest of England*, 147.

rank.”¹ To that end text books in the vernacular must be produced. Giving himself to this task, Alfred changed the tide from Latin to English and became the founder of an English prose literature — the first of all modern literatures. As author and translator Alfred himself became the leader and pioneer in this movement. Moreover, Alfred the author was not a slavish translator, but an editor and a philosopher, for he enriched his narrative with his own thought. He mastered the Latin, that he might translate himself, but was always modest as to his abilities and his learning.² Unlike Charles the Great, he was not only a patron of scholars, but a scholar himself. And to this extent Alfred had an advantage over his kinsmen on the continent in that it made him a leader in his own literary court.

The “stillness” of Alfred’s reign was again broken, in 893, when a Danish fleet of 250 vessels assembled at Boulogne for an attack upon the English coast. They succeeded in landing and occupying a portion of Kent. For the next four years Alfred, with the assistance of his son Edward and his son-in-law Ethelred, was kept busy pursuing them from east to west and west to east again. But in 897 their fleet was bottled up in the river Lea, not far from London, and the Danish force rapidly went to pieces. This marked the conclusion of Alfred’s wars.

¹ Alfred’s Preface to Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*, in Green, *Conquest of England*, 153.

² “But now he begs of those who may please to read the book, in God’s name, to pray for him, and not to blame him if they should understand it better than he was able to do. For every man must, according to the ability of his intellect, say what he says, and do what he does.” Preface to Alfred’s Translation of Boethius’ *Consolations of Philosophy*, in Paul’s *Alfred the Great*, 174.

His was no "soft" life. Alfred frequently revealed himself in his literary work, as he does in the passage from his translation of Boethius, in which he remarks, "No wise man should desire a soft life, if he careth for any virtues or any worship here from the world, or for eternal life after this world. But every wise man should struggle both against hard fortune and against a pleasant one: lest he should presume upon his good fortune, or despair of his bad one."¹ The man who could utter such sentiments was no common man.

ALFRED'S CHARACTER.

Though removed by a thousand years, the lessons of Alfred's reign are as pertinent to-day as they were for the Saxons. That such wisdom and perfection of character, combined with the vigor of youth, should reside in one man is one of the marvels of history. Freeman calls Alfred "the most perfect character in history"² and confesses his inability to represent adequately and with justice the virtues of this man.

His reign continued for thirty years, but in that time was accomplished what took centuries of effort on the continent of Europe. It is noteworthy that Alfred, of all the Saxon kings, his predecessors and successors, many of whom were able men and strong rulers, is the only one that stands out with distinctness in early English history.

Frederic Harrison pays him this tribute: "Of all the names in history there is only our English Alfred

¹ Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, II, 48, 49.

² Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, I, 33.

whose record is without stain and without weakness — who is equally amongst the greatest of men in genius, in magnanimity, in valour, in moral purity, in intellectual force, in practical wisdom, and in beauty of soul.”¹

The virtues of Alfred are many. They would make a long roll. First of all was his simplicity of character, his interest in the common people, his desire for their education. Like our Washington, he was content to do his plain duty. There was not a selfish streak anywhere in Alfred. The welfare of his people was his constant care. He was forgiving of his enemies and treated them always with the utmost fairness. Moreover, he was not ambitious of personal glory. He aimed at results and not at self-glorification. In his numerous translations there was much that was his own thought. Nevertheless, he was content that others might have the full credit of authorship, himself satisfied if by precept and suggestion he could lift the moral level of his people.

Alfred was modest and he had the rare statesman-like quality of being able to estimate his own limitations. When Alfred got the upper hand of the Danes, he was content to consolidate and solidify what he had acquired. He did not make the mistake of his continental predecessor of the same race, Charles the Great, and continue the work of territorial expansion without nationalization, leaving to his successors an empire that should fall asunder. That Alfred knew his bounds and kept within them, is a tribute to his

¹ Harrison's *Alfred as King*, in Bowker's *Alfred the Great*, ch. 2, p. 41.

political sagacity. Without Alfred there could have been no Eadred, king of all England.

Alfred was not a believer in national isolation. He continued the allegiance of England to the papal court at Rome; he sent out expeditions to explore the Baltic and lands that were unknown to him, and established commercial relations with the countries of the continent. Further, Alfred was free from petty and provincial jealousies. His large-mindedness led him to recognize ability in others, and no matter of what nationality, the learned always stood upon an equal footing at his court. His example of toleration was really unparalleled and in advance of his age.

Alfred was methodical, prudent, systematic. There was no limit to his energy and no field of activity for which his talents did not seem to fit him. He was as fond of sport as of work. He followed the chase, patronized the crafts. His love of justice was proverbial, and he kept his finger constantly upon his judges; he allowed nothing to escape him. Busy man that he was, he found time to hear many appeals to his justice. His biographer says of those who sought the king they "knew that in the king's presence no part of their wrong would be hidden; and no wonder, for the king was a most acute investigator in passing sentence, as he was in all other things."¹

He possessed a genius for organization and administration, an energy that was tireless, a readiness of mind and hand that grasped many of the practical arts in all their details; a versatility that enabled him

¹ Asser, 85.

to turn his activity from war to literature, from literature to finance, from finance to law, from law to the church, and in all showing the same aggressive interest and serving all with equal ability.

These are virtues enough to entitle their possessor to the name of Great. But with all these, Alfred possessed a fortitude, a courage in adversity that enabled him to turn defeat into victory, to ignore disease and physical comfort. He never ran away, as many of his contemporaries did, to escape the rigors of war and the odium of defeat. Unlike other great warriors, Alfred fought only for the defence of his country. He fought no wars of aggression; he wanted territorial expansion as rapid only as the national consciousness warranted. He was in no sense a destroyer of nations like Napoleon, but a maker of a nation; or, perhaps, to be more exact, I should say, the restorer of a nation.

Alfred's effort to place England upon a national basis and his conception of national character and national greatness constitute his highest claim to fame.

Of his personal appearance we have no record. Will this not enable us the better to remember Alfred — the ideal man, the perfect ruler! Alfred says of himself, "This I can now most truly say, that I have desired to live worthily while I lived, and after my life to leave to the men that should be after me a remembrance in good works."¹ What more fitting epitaph could be pronounced upon his work than his own words?

¹ Alfred's Boethius, in Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, II, 31.

THE SPOTLESS KING.

I.

Some lights there be within the Heavenly Spheres
Yet unrevealed, the interspace so vast ;
So through the distance of a thousand years
Alfred's full radiance shines on us at last.

II.

Star of the spotless fame, from far-off skies
Teaching this truth, too long not understood,
That only they are worthy who are wise,
And none are truly great that are not good.

III.

Of valour, virtue, letters, learning, law,
Pattern and prince, His name will now abide,
Long as of conscience Rulers live in awe,
And love of country is their only pride.

IV.

But with His name four other names attune,
Which from oblivion guardian Song may save ;
Lone Athelney, victorious Ethandune,
Wantage his cradle, Winchester his grave.
— *The tribute of Alfred Austin, Poet Laureate of England.*

ALFRED A WRITER AND A PATRON OF LEARNING

BY PROFESSOR HENRY L. CHAPMAN, BOWDOIN COLLEGE

"Ever must the Sovereign of Mankind be fitly entitled King," says Carlyle. Alfred's claim to a sovereignty of mankind, and hence to kingship, rests not more upon his valor as a soldier, his skill and pertinacity as a commander, his practical wisdom as a legislator and ruler, than upon the spiritual elements of his nature which made him the teacher of his people, and their exemplar in intellectual and moral and religious character. He was nearly forty years of age, and had been king for at least fifteen years, before the distracted condition of his kingdom allowed him to turn his energies to the promotion of learning among his subjects, and to the preparation of books by his own hand for their enlightenment. Seven or eight of those years had been passed in continual and sometimes disheartening struggles against the fierce Danish invaders, and the other seven or eight years had been ceaselessly occupied in the restoration of his desolated kingdom,—in reorganizing his army, in building a navy, in re-establishing ruined monasteries and founding new ones, in rebuilding and fortifying towns, in repairing the devastation of every kind that had been wrought by the Northern barbarians. Then, with a far-sighted wisdom which justifies his title of "the Great," and with a singleness

and tenacity of purpose probably unexampled, he set himself to lay the foundations of a beneficent and stable sovereignty in the institutions of law, justice, education and religion.

“His noble nature,” says the good bishop Asser, “implanted in him from his cradle a love of wisdom above all things;” and there is little doubt that, even from childhood, Alfred felt a profound and absorbing interest in letters. “He listened,” says Asser, “with serious attention to the Saxon poems which (as a boy) he often heard recited, and easily retained them in his docile memory.” And then the loyal Welsh bishop, who was the bosom friend of his royal master, and who revered him as much as he loved him, tells this engaging story of his childhood days: “On a certain day his mother was showing him and his brothers a Saxon book of poetry, which she held in her hand, and said, ‘Whichever of you shall the soonest learn this volume shall have it for his own.’ Stimulated by these words, or rather by the Divine inspiration, and allured by the beautifully illuminated letter at the beginning of the volume, he spoke before all his brothers, who, though his seniors in age, were not so in grace, and answered, ‘Will you really give that book to one of us, that is to say, to him who can first understand and repeat it to you?’ At this his mother smiled with satisfaction, and confirmed what she had before said. Upon which the boy took the book out of her hand, and went to his master to read it, and in due time brought it to his mother and recited it.”

It is true that some difficulties have been raised about the dates associated with this story, and men have debated whether it was Alfred's mother Osburh or his step-mother Judith to whom Asser refers, and objections have been found in either case,—yet the story is far more specific than are the dates connected with it, and it is so consistent with Alfred's feeling for books, both in his youth and in his maturity, and the authority for it is so good, that it is accepted as substantially true, in spite of the difficulties I have mentioned.

Alfred's early interest in poetry and in books may have been quickened by his two journeys to Rome, where it is not unlikely that his boyish mind, sedate beyond his years, was impressed by what he saw and heard in the sacred city which was then the home of literature and art, as well as of religion. But in his father's kingdom of Wessex there was no opportunity for him to cultivate the love of learning which seems always to have distinguished him. By the time he had reached the age of eighteen Northumbria, which for two hundred years had been the home of English poetry and learning, was so completely ravaged and desolated by the heathen Danes that no religious houses or libraries remained undestroyed. Two years later East Anglia was similarly devastated, and the ruthless barbarians were directing their march toward his own land of Wessex; and they had penetrated to its heart, and seemed to be its masters, seven years after Alfred had become its king. During his boyhood, his youth, and the early years of his kingship,

no conditions could have been more unfavorable for even the rudimentary study of books. He confessed to his bishop Asser, "with many lamentations and sighs" that this was "one of his greatest difficulties and impediments in this life, namely, that when he was young and had the capacity for learning, he could not find teachers; but when he was more advanced in life he was harrassed by so many diseases unknown to all the physicians of this island, as well as by internal and external anxieties of sovereignty, and by continual invasions of the pagans, and had his teachers and writers also so much disturbed, that there was no time for reading. But yet," continues Asser, "among the impediments of this present life, from infancy up to the present time, and, as I believe, even until his death, he continued to feel the same insatiable desire of knowledge."

As soon, therefore, as the improved condition of his kingdom afforded him even a little respite from the "anxieties of sovereignty" and the "continual invasions of the pagans," he set himself to the serious, and thereafter unintermitted, purpose of gaining knowledge and wisdom for himself, and of providing instruction for his subjects. Nay, he went farther, and, so far as possible, he *enforced* the claims of learning upon his people; and it is probable, as Mr. Stopford Brooke suggests, that "the English warriors and courtiers of a mature age were sorely troubled when the king compelled them to learn to read and write, or if they could not learn, to hire a freeman or slave to recite before them at fixed times the books

needful for their duties." It was not easy to put to school men who had reached and even passed middle life in utter ignorance of letters, and whose lives had been lived under the hard conditions that had blotted out the monasteries, the only seats of learning, and had made a soldier or a fugitive of every Englishman. What cannot be done with the old, however, may be done with the young; and hence arose Alfred's scheme of universal, if not compulsory, education of the young, an elementary education, to be sure, but valuable as a foundation of character and of intelligent citizenship. But it was nearly a thousand years—not until the nineteenth century—before his ideal of an universal primary education was even approximately reached in his own land, the England of boasted intelligence and freedom. When Alfred found that it was not practicable, and not even possible to incite the older men to a love of learning like his own, he sent the *sons* of the nobility, and of some who were not noble, to the schools in which his own children were taught; that they might learn to read both English and Latin books, and to translate the one into the other. "And this I would have you do," he wrote to the bishop of Worcester, "if we can preserve peace, to set *all* the youth now in England of free men, whose circumstances enable them to devote themselves to it, to learn as long as they are not old enough for other occupations, until they are well able to read English writing, and let those be afterward taught in the Latin language who are to continue learning and be promoted to a higher rank."

These simple and serious words of Alfred disclose a policy worthy of the wise and far-sighted ruler, who felt profoundly that the strength and stability of the state depended upon the character and intelligence of its citizens,—a truth that was far from being as obvious in the England of the ninth century as it was in the England of the nineteenth. But in order to carry out his scheme it was essential to have competent and consecrated helpers, and these he had already sought. “He would avail himself,” says Asser, in one of the few passages in which his plain narrative rises into the fervor of poetical phrase and similitude,—“he would avail himself of every opportunity to procure coadjutors in his good designs, to aid him in his strivings after wisdom, that he might attain to what he aimed at ; and, like a prudent bird, which rising in summer with the early morning from her beloved nest, steers her rapid flight through the uncertain tracks of ether, and descends on the manifold and varied flowers of grasses, herbs, and shrubs, essaying that which pleases most, that she may bear it to her home, so did he direct his eyes afar, and seek *without*, that which he had not *within*, namely in his own kingdom.”

In the way thus figuratively described, Alfred sought out and drew into his kingdom, and to his help, men of piety and learning from every side, to be, first, his own teachers, and afterwards to assist him in teaching his people, in the English language, what, in his judgment, it was requisite for them to learn both of secular and of sacred knowledge. The

names of those whom he thus summoned to his aid constitute, in view of the service to which they were called, a veritable roll of honor, which it is grateful to repeat, albeit some of them seem strange to our ears, and form themselves but shyly on our lips: Werfrith, bishop of Worcester,—Plegmund, of Mercia, who was made Archbishop of Canterbury,—Athelstan and Werwulf, two Mercian priests, who became Alfred's chaplains and constant companions and teachers,—Grimbald, who came across the water from Flanders, and was put over the new abbey at Winchester,—John, the old Saxon, transferred from a monastery in Westphalia to Alfred's new monastery in Athelney,—and, finally, from the far borders of Wales, Asser, the bishop of St. David's, came to be the bosom-friend and the reverent biographer of the good king.

In this choice company of priests and scholars Alfred found, at once, the sympathy and the instruction which he craved, and it was not long before he became so much the master of the Latin language that he was prepared not only to co-operate with them, but to lead them in the education of his people. His ardent and energetic nature would not suffer either himself or his co-laborers to be languid in the great task to which he had set himself. He stimulated them, by the example of his own unwearied application and by his fervent and repeated exhortations, to constant diligence. And then he presented the unique spectacle of a king preparing with his own hands the books which his people needed to fit them

for their civic and religious duties, to acquaint them with the history of their own land and of lands beyond the sea, to fortify them against the ills of life, and to build them up in the practice of an unselfish and undismayed adherence to rectitude of character and of conduct. It was a new exhibition of kingliness, and as noble as it was new. The distractions and dangers to which he was still subject in the government of his kingdom, the physical suffering and disease from which he was never free,—these neither quenched nor interrupted the ardor with which he wrought at the difficult and self-imposed task. In doing this he changed, to use the words of the historian Green, “the whole front of English literature.” Northumbria had been the home of English poetry, and the scriptural poems of Cædmon chanted upon the consecrated cliffs of Whitby, the tale of heroism and fate in the fine old epic of Beowulf, the Christian verses of Cynewulf and other Northumbrian singers, the riddles, and battle-songs and lyrics which are prized all the more because they are the survivors, doubtless, of many others that are lost,—these are the still-remaining proof of the vigorous life to which English *poetry* had attained before the disastrous invasion of the Danes. But English *prose* hardly existed at all. It was from Alfred’s day that this tide of literary fashion suddenly turned, and English prose started vigorously into life. Theology, history, the lives of saints, and even the rudimentary science of the time were clothed for the first time in an English dress. A national literature, in fact, sprang suddenly

into existence which was without parallel in the western world. "English, therefore," to quote again from Mr. Green, "was not only the first Teutonic literature — it was the earliest prose literature of the modern world. And at the outset of English literature stands the figure of Alfred. The mighty roll of books that fill our libraries opens with the translations of the king."

These are translations into English from the Latin language which was, of course, an unknown tongue to the people generally, and far too often to the priests themselves who shared in the prevailing illiteracy, and whose conduct of the prescribed services of the church was unintelligent and parrot-like. It was necessary, as Alfred clearly saw, to communicate knowledge to the people in their own language or they must still remain illiterate, and even the priests must be incited to higher learning by appeals addressed to them in their mother-tongue. The spirit in which he entered upon this work, and the good sense which prompted it, and the manner in which he expressed himself and set up the earliest standard of English prose, are all well exhibited in the preface to what was probably the first book he translated, the *Cura Pastoralis* of Pope Gregory. The Preface was addressed to the bishop of Worcester, and runs, in part, as follows :

"King Alfred biddeth greet Bishop Waerferth with loving and friendly words, and I let it be known to thee that it has come very often into my mind what wise men there formerly were both among the clergy and the laymen, and what happy times there were then throughout England; and how the kings who had rule over the people

obeyed God and his ministers, and they kept peace, law, and order at home, and also spread their lands abroad; and how it was well with them both in war and in wisdom; and also how keen were the clergy about both teaching and learning and all the services they owed to God, and how men from abroad sought wisdom and teaching hither in our land, and how we must now get them from without if we would have them. So utterly had learning fallen away in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their service-books in English, or even put a letter from Latin into English; and I think there were not many beyond the Humber. So few there were of them that I cannot think of even one when I came to the throne. Thanks be to God Almighty that we now have any supply of teachers. And therefore I bid thee do, as I believe thou art willing to do,—free thyself from the things of this world as often as thou canst, that thou mayst put to work the wisdom that God has given thee wherever thou canst. * * * * *

“When I considered all this I remembered also how I saw, before it had been all ravaged and burnt, how the churches throughout the whole of England stood filled with treasures and books, and there was also a great multitude of God’s servants, but they had very little knowledge of the books, for they could not understand anything of them because they were not written in their own language.

* * * * *

“When I remembered all this I wondered extremely that the good and wise men who were formerly all over England, and had perfectly learned all the books, did not wish to translate them into their own language. But again I soon answered myself and said, ‘They did not think that men would ever be so careless, and that learning would so decay.’

“Then I remembered how the Law was first given in the Hebrew tongue, and again, how when the Greeks learned it they turned it all into their own tongue, and also all other books. And again how the Romans did the same; when they had learned it, they turned all of it by wise translators into their own tongue. And also all other christian peoples turned some part of the old books into their own tongue. Therefore it seemeth better to me, if it seemeth so to you, that we also turn some books—those which are most needful for men to know—into the tongue which we can all understand.

* * * * *

“When I remembered how the knowledge of the Latin tongue had before this fallen away throughout England, and yet that many could read English writing—then I began amidst other divers and manifold

occupations of this kingdom to turn into English the book which in Latin is named *Pastoralis*, and in English *Shepherd's Book* ; sometimes word for word, sometimes meaning for meaning, as I had learned it from Plegmund, my archbishop, and Asser, my bishop, and from Grimbold, my mass-priest, and from John, my mass-priest. When I had learned it so that I understood it, and so that I could quite clearly give its meaning, I turned it into English," etc.

In this preface, the nobility of which one feels is somehow heightened by its touch of pathos, we have an exhibition, beyond any power of description, of Alfred's serious and beautiful concern for the spiritual welfare of his subjects, and for the true greatness of his realm ; an exhibition also of his practical wisdom and sound judgment in seeing, from the history of other nations, that his own people could be enriched with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge only as these were brought to them in their native speech. It is, moreover, an engaging picture of the king's modesty, and of his eagerness to enlist the service and co-operation of his chosen friends in the great work to which his own heart was committed. And finally it is a good example of the simple and affecting power with which he handled the resources of the common speech, and in clearness, dignity, and individuality of tone, furnished a model for the prose-writers of his time and for those who should come after him. It is hard to see why it does not substantially conform to the famous definition of *style* which Matthew Arnold carefully formulated a thousand years later, as "a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it."

The books which Alfred unquestionably wrote, as translator and editor,—handling freely the original material by addition, omission, and re-arrangement,—are four in number. They are the *Cura Pastoralis*, of Pope Gregory, a manual of training for the priestly office, and of the duties of the clergy, setting forth the great Pope's ideal of a Christian priest; the *Ecclesiastical History of Britain*, by the Venerable Bede, a history not merely of the church but of the English people from the point of view of a Christian ecclesiastic and a monk; a *History of the World*, by Orosius, a Spanish monk and disciple of St. Augustine; and the *Consolations of Philosophy*, by Boethius, written in the prison where he lay awaiting execution on the charge of conspiracy and treason.

It would be instructive, if time permitted, to dwell upon the characteristics of these four books, and upon Alfred's way of dealing with each of them. The book of the *Consolations* has a peculiar interest because it contains so much that is not translation but the personal contribution of the king. It is the fullest revelation of the charm of his style and of the nobility of his spirit,—and the two seem to be inseparably combined.

“The whole range of ancient and modern literature,” says Mr. Frederic Harrison, “contains nothing more genuine, more natural, more pellucid. He is not composing a book to be studied, admired, or criticised. He is baring his whole soul to us. He speaks as one on his knees, in the silence of his own chamber, in the presence of his God, who is pouring forth

his inmost thoughts, hopes, and sorrows to the all-seeing eye, which knoweth the secrets of every heart, from whom nothing is hidden or unknown. And as he opens to us his own soul, as freely as he would bare it to his Maker, we look down into one of the purest, truest, bravest hearts that ever beat within a human frame."

THE ANGLO-SAXON CONSTITUTION AND LAWS IN THE TIME OF ALFRED THE GREAT

BY HON. ALBERT R. SAVAGE, AUBURN

It is not without some degree of premeditation that I have chosen to call the constitution and laws in the time of King Alfred, Anglo-Saxon, rather than English, for there was really no England at that time, no united government of that territory now known as England. The amalgamating process begun by Egbert a century before Alfred was not complete. Alfred himself, in the preface to the laws or dooms published by him, calls himself, "I Alfred, King of the West Saxons."

It is not easy to ascertain with exactness what was the Anglo-Saxon constitution and what were their laws in the time of King Alfred. It was a period of transition in manners and customs. It was also such a period, in some respects, so far as relates to the laws. There was no written code of general law, nor was there any written constitution. Indeed, there were few written laws of any kind, and those were directed mostly to wrongs against the king, or injuries to private persons, what we should call criminal or tortious. Such were the laws or dooms of Æthelbeht and Wihtraed of Kent and Ine of Wessex. Such were the laws promulgated by Alfred himself. Of fundamental, organic law, there are few records, and our information is fragmentary and obscure. Our knowledge of the dress and dialect of our ancestors is more

definite than that of their laws. The most profound commentators upon the laws of that period are constantly obliged to have recourse to such words and phrases as "perhaps," "probably," "possibly," "may have been," and "might have been."

It has not been much more difficult to reconstruct ancient customs and laws from ruins and hieroglyphs, than it has been to ascertain what was Anglo-Saxon law of any particular period, from the faint traces that have come down to us. Some things, of course, are certain. Many others are entirely uncertain, if we seek to refer them to any definite period. Occasional landmarks may be found which direct the inquirer with more or less certainty. But, generally speaking, one who enters the domain of constitutional law in the time of Alfred is venturing into a wilderness in which the paths trodden by generations of men before him have become obliterated by the lapse of time.

Using the term *constitution* as meaning a permanent system of government, a system enduring from generation to generation, and not changeable by the will of the monarch, or by any other means except the silent process of the ages, or by revolution,—such a constitution has been the fundamental law of England from the earliest conquests of the Saxons to the present time. Such a constitution was the outgrowth of the character of the people themselves and of their environment, both in the fatherland from which they came and in the confines of Britain, rather than the work of any one man or body of men. No

king made it ; no king can unmake it. The genius of Alfred the Great, monarch, legislator, statesman, victorious general, left no trace upon it. He left it as he found it. I mean, of course, he left no trace upon the organic system. There is no doubt, however, that the influence of his life, which is the precious heritage of all English-speaking people, had much to do with the development of English constitutional principles. Upon his monument at Wantage is a single line, which tells truly what his relations were to the constitution and laws of his time : —

“ The laws were powerless, and he gave them force.”

Using the term “ laws ” as meaning those enforceable rules of conduct which govern the relations of men among themselves, and their relations to the governing power, there were in Alfred’s time both written and unwritten laws. The great body of the law was unwritten, and consisted of immemorial customs and usages, which had the force of law and were recognized as such.

Besides these, there were the written laws, the statutes or dooms of different monarchs, who promulgated them with the consent of their councils of wise men, or witenagemots. It is probable that these statutes were for the most part the written expression of customs already existing.

The Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Britain brought with them the body of their law,— the customs which ripened into law, and which have become familiar to us through the writings of Tacitus and Cæsar. The conquered Britons were practically destroyed as a

race. They left scarcely a trace of law or language. The Romans who had been lords of the land for more than four and one-half centuries, were equally unfortunate. Not a Roman law or institution survived the invasion of the Jutes. The Jutes and Saxons invaded Britain to stay. The entire tribe of the Angles immigrated to Britain. They took their wives and children and household gods with them. They transplanted their laws and institutions, and began a new Germany in Britain.

It is certain that the early Saxon in England dwelt under the same customs as his father and grandfather had dwelt under across the the North Sea. For several centuries progress was slight and development was slow. The dooms of Æthelbeht of Kent, which were published about the end of the sixth century, and which are said to have been the first written German laws, in a pure German tongue, seem to assume the existence of general customs, but do not modify them.

Five centuries later, at the end of the Saxon period, it is found that only traces remain of some ancient customs, while new customs, unknown to the Germans, are firmly entrenched. To point out the time of most of these changes, within the period of a century, is now practically impossible.

It follows, therefore, that when one attempts to write or speak about the laws in the time of Alfred, he must be understood as referring to that period of a century or two which ends with the reign of Alfred.

The England of Alfred, like the England of to-day, was a limited, constitutional monarchy. By "constitutional" is meant that the government was established and maintained according to certain established customs or laws, not written, but understood, to break which was révolution.

The Saxons in the fatherland had no king. The valiant dux who led them in war laid aside his power when peace returned. But in those troublous times, when turbulent invaders were in constant conflict with the native Britons, or with other turbulent tribes of invaders, whose territory adjoined their own, it was an easy and necessary step to make their bravest, strongest military leader their king. The king was not absolute, nor was the kingship strictly hereditary. Theoretically, the kingship was elective. No English king until long after the Norman conquest ever mounted the throne without an election by the witenagemot, that is to say, without their expressed assent. Even William the Norman Conqueror bowed his neck to the Saxon constitution, and called together the witenagemot to confirm his right to the throne. It may be that the wise men who voted that he be king had much regard for their own necks; at the same time, it is clear that William thought that the crown would be steadier on his head if he followed the custom of Saxon-England.

And the witenagemot which elected had also the power to depose the king, a power which was sometimes exercised.

I have said that the kingship was not strictly hereditary. But it usually happened, even in the earlier days, that a powerful king, who had a son grown up and competent, could secure his succession to the throne. Sometimes he admitted the son to a share of royal power in his own lifetime. More frequently he left his son in possession of so much power that none cared to dispute it. Out of a maze of darkness there finally comes to be established this constitutional principle that the succession is to be restricted to one family, a rule not departed from except in case of great emergency or revolution. The choice seems to have been limited, as Stubbs says, to the best qualified person standing in close relationship to the last king. Generally a son, or brother, or other near kinsman was chosen. And as I have already said, when a king of mature years died, his eldest son usually was regarded as the best qualified to succeed. But as a matter of fact, the cases of succession of son to father in the heptarchic kingdoms were few indeed. In Wessex there was not one instance from 685 to 836. It was almost equally so in the other kingdoms. Their reigns were generally short; the kings died young; their sons were only children. After the death of Egbert, the founder of that West Saxon dynasty which has endured to the present day, the hereditary principle was maintained, but only as a principle, for the crown rarely descended from father to son. Alfred himself was the fourth son of Ethelwulf, son of Egbert, and succeeded his elder brother Æthelred, being chosen by the witenagemot, in preference to

the minor son of Æthelred. So it appears that the kingship was not only elective in theory, but selective in fact. This selection belonged to the witenagemot, or assembly of wise men, both when it was merely a formal election and when there was a selection by free choice, as sometimes happened.

The election itself was exercised by the witan in general assemblies of the whole nation; that is to say, in general assemblies of so many of the people as lived near enough to the place of election to attend it. The popular concourse took no part in the election, but expressed their approval of it by the shaking of spears and the clanging of shields. This popular approval was deemed an additional security to the stability of the incoming monarch's reign.

The witenagemot was composed of the bishops, the ealdormen or magistrates of the shires or provinces, and a number of the king's friends and retainers, members of the comitatus; and as these latter were appointed by the king, it was easily possible for him, by appointments, to secure favorable action from that body. Sometimes, however, the witenagemot was stronger than a weak king, and sometimes, too, it was the scene of factional contests between powerful retainers, while the king is little more than a puppet tossed between the two, as in the case of Godwin and Leofric in the reign of Edward the Confessor.

But in other respects than the royal succession the witan was a limitation upon the power of the monarch, for the part taken by the witan was real and seemingly authoritative. How much real authority it possessed,

however, may be a matter of conjecture. In the early days and under the weak kings, no doubt the decision of the council was arrived at by independent voting. It is probable, however, in later times, when the power of royalty became more firmly established, that the will of the king was seldom thwarted by adverse determinations of the witenagemot.

It is to be noted that although the various codes of Anglo-Saxon laws were originated or drafted by the kings whose names they bear, in no instance did a king assume the authority to promulgate a code without the counsel and consent of his witenagemot. The witan, therefore, seems to have possessed the theoretical power of veto upon legislation. This power was of little consequence, however, for it was rarely or never exercised, and also for the reason that there was but little constructive legislation. The dooms of Ine and Alfred are supposed to have been but little more than the re-enactment of existing customs, or putting them into written form.

Again, the advice and consent of the witenagemot seem to have been essential to the validity of royal grants of the public demesne. It was customary that transfers of land should be made with certain particularities, and before witnesses. Many charters to religious houses were passed under the hands of the witenagemot, though the grantor was some powerful person other than the king. But "when a grant was made by which the land given was released from special obligations and made alodial and heritable forever, the consent of the nation, the owner, as must

be supposed, of the land so released, was imperatively necessary."

The community from of old had possessed and exercised the power to regulate all changes of ownership which affected their own body, and in consenting to royal grants, the witenagemot were the representatives of the community.

The witenagemot was also a court of justice of last resort. It heard causes and decided suits. To its judgments the king himself was amenable. By it he might be compelled to restore that which he had unjustly taken from others. By it, kings might be imprisoned or outlawed or deposed. It is said that the criminal jurisdiction of the witenagemot had not varied much from the days of which Tacitus wrote to the time of Edward the Confessor.

The reader of later English history, as well as the student of Anglo-Saxon character, may not be surprised — he certainly will be gratified — to know that even in those remote ages, the witenagemot possessed in some degree the power of the purse and the sword. That the witenagemot was consulted in the determination of war and peace, and also in the conduct of warlike measures, is beyond dispute. So in the case of extraordinary taxation. This was levied only with the consent and counsel of the witan. General taxation as we understand it was unknown. The ordinary royal needs were supplied by the income of the royal farms and the public lands, and "all local requirements were met by the alodial obligations discharged by personal services."

The English king, therefore, was a limited monarch, in theory and in practice. To what degree he was limited in practice depended, however, upon the character of the king himself, and of the time in which he reigned. Although he was surrounded by constitutional limitations, a strong king was not much restrained by them. They were easy to break through. The witenagemot was the sole organized official restraint upon the king. It was originally the council of the nation. But as the king possessed the power of appointment, and by enlarging the number of his retainers could secure a majority in favor of his policy, it became the council of the king.

Mr. Stubbs very happily epitomizes the constitutional character of royalty as follows: "The king is neither a mere ornamental appendage nor a ruler after the imperial model. He is not the supreme landowner, for he cannot without consent of the witan add a portion of the public land to his own demesne. He requires their consent for legislation or taxation, for the exercise of jurisdiction, for the determination of war or peace. He is elected by them, and liable to be deposed by them. He cannot settle the succession to the throne without their sanction. He is not the fountain of justice which has always been administered in the local courts; he is the defender of the public peace, not the autocratic maintainer of the rights of subjects who derive all their rights from him. But notwithstanding, he is the representative of the unity and dignity, and of the historical career of the race; the unquestioned leader of the host; the

supreme judge of ultimate resort. The national officers are his officers, the sheriffs are his stewards, the bishops, ealdormen and witan are his bishops, ealdormen and witan. The public peace is his peace; the sanction which makes him inviolable and secure is not the simple toleration of his people, but the character impressed upon him by unction and coronation, and acknowledged by himself in the promises he has made to govern well and maintain religion, peace and justice."

As a part of the organic system of government, some notice must be paid to the courts of justice, which in the time of Alfred had assumed some permanent form. Originally, Saxon freeholders met armed, from time to time, with more or less regularity, and their meeting was at once a parliament, a muster and a court. All meetings or moots were held upon the open moor, and usually in places dedicated to that purpose by some ceremonies and long use. Below the witan, which was in some sense a court of appeal, there was first the folk moot, or county court. Theoretically, at this court, before which all greater civil and criminal cases within the shire or county were tried, the king sat as president. And if he were not personally present, the ealdorman of the shire presided in his stead. He was a local magistrate, named by the king. From his title comes the English earl, which the Normans call count. With the king or ealdorman as present, sat the grand jury of a certain number of freeholders. The procedure in criminal and civil trials was the same. The functions

of the grand jury, or the jury—for the distinction between grand jury and petit or traverse jury was unknown in the time of Alfred—are not clearly known. The same jury which indicted the accused afterwards tried him. It was not until the fourteenth century that men who had as members of the grand jury indicted a person were forbidden by law from afterwards sitting upon the petit jury which tried him. The indictment itself was a presentment to the king's justices, in most cases oral merely, of such persons as were reputed to be guilty of crimes. It is not known that they heard evidence, certainly not in all cases. The accused were presented on suspicion or reputation, rather than upon *prima facie* proof, as with us. If the accused, after indictment, pleaded "not guilty," unless he had been caught red-handed in the act, he was allowed to attempt to prove his innocence by customary rules, by ordeal or the oaths of compurgators. If he failed, he was sentenced to the customary or fixed penalty by the king, which was generally a bot or compensation to be paid to the injured party, or, if he had been slain, to his family, and usually there was also a fine to be paid to the king. A few offences, like secret murder, murder of kin, arson, witchcraft and treason, were bootless, and were punished by death or exile. Christian men offending against church law also were subject to heavy penances from the church, which were settled at church councils by the archbishop's authority.

It seems strange to us, in speaking of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers even a thousand years ago, that

reputation or suspicion was taken for proof, that one suspected of crime and so presented by the grand jury, should be presumed to be guilty unless he proved himself innocent, the exact reverse of our present safeguard that the citizen is presumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty.

Again, what grotesque forms of justice, when the accused was permitted to prove his innocence, in the early days, by his own oath of denial alone, and when that was seen to be productive of perjury and unsafe to the public, by the oaths of compurgators, that is, by oaths of a certain number of his neighbors, who were freeholders. The number varied according to the character of the offence and the social standing of the accused. The oath was simply that they believed that the accused had sworn truly.

If it was not the first offence, or if the compurgators did not agree to make the oath, or sometimes at his own option, the accused was put to the ordeal. The trial by ordeal was either by fire or by water. In the ordeal by fire, the accused was caused to pass blindfolded and barefoot over nine hot, glowing ploughshares, or to carry burning irons in his hands, and according as he escaped burning or not, he was acquitted or condemned.

The water ordeal was performed either in hot or cold water. In the cold water ordeal, the accused was thrown into a body of water. If he sank, he was deemed innocent; if he floated, he was undoubtedly guilty. So if after putting his bare arms or legs into

scalding water, he came out unhurt, he was taken to be innocent ; otherwise, guilty.

These devices seem to us to be particularly calculated to condemn the innocent ; that only crafty, subtle knaves would know how to avoid the consequences of the ordeal. But the theory of our fathers was that God would by the mere contrivance of man, exercise His power in favor of the innocent.

Beneath the folk-moot or shire-moot or county court, were the hundred-moots and the hall-moots. The hundred in the days before Tacitus probably signified such a compact body of the population as could furnish one hundred men for military service ; but though the name remained, it is probably true that it never signified any exact number of men in England, but it came rather to be applied to a subdivision of the community, smaller than the shire or county, and larger than the borough or township. We may call it a district. The hundred-moot had original civil and criminal jurisdiction within the district. It had a grand jury, and could enforce the attendance of persons from each vill or township in the district. It met regularly, probably quarterly, and did the kind of work which was afterwards, in the reign of Edward the Third, transferred to his justices of the peace,—and very likely the same general work that justices of the peace and trial justices do in our State to-day.

Then there were the hall-moots, held under the lord of the township or his deputy, which had jurisdiction of small civil cases and misdemeanors. They correspond to the Norman courts *baron*. Traces of

hall-moots still exist in England, where the lord of the estate, in some cases hereditary, has territorial jurisdiction over petty offences and minor civil complaints. The local tenure of land and local agricultural customs and rents chiefly gave rise to the business of hall-moots.

In this connection, it may be noticed that there was another officer in the shire connected with the administration of justice besides the ealdorman, a local freeholder, elected by his fellows, but no doubt at the nomination of the king usually. He was called the scir-gerefa, that is the shire-reave, or sheriff. It was his duty to look after the king's estates in the shire, and the king's rights, dues and fines. He was the king's representative in the matters of finance and the execution of justice.

Of the laws of land tenure in the time of Alfred, I do not propose to speak at length. The relation of the subject to the land upon which he dwelt furnishes matter for many volumes of black-letter law. The rights acquired by the various grades of ownership of land and the duties imposed upon him who cultivated it were customary. They depended upon customs, the origin of which is uncertain, but which reach back to the time beyond which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. These customs had the force of law. Time will not permit, nor would it serve any good purpose to resurrect this body of law from the dust in which it has long lain buried, and in which it has been disturbed in recent centuries only by schoolmen, whose writings are as dry and

dusty as the law itself. It is of interest only to antiquaries.

I will give you briefly, as an illustration, the condition of the various landed classes, as stated in an old law tract of the tenth century:

“Of the gentleman or thane (thegen). It is his law that he is worthy of the right of book or charter (i. e., to convey or devise his land according to his charter), and that he must do these things for his land, war-service, fortress help, and bridge-work. Also on many lands more land-right (rent-duty) ariseth at the king's ban or summons, such as maintaining of a deer-fence for the king's vill, and clothing for war, and guarding of the sea, and head-ward, and army-guard, alms-fee and church-scot, and many other divers things.

“The geneat's or peasant's right is divers, according to the custom of the land. On some lands he must pay rent (land gavel) and a grass-hog a year, and ride and carry and take loads, work and maintain his lord, and reap and mow, hew deer-fences and keep up hedges, build and make enclosures, bring new fare to town, pay church-scot and alms-fee, keep head-ward and horse-ward, do errands far or near, whithersoever he be told,

“The cottar's right, according to the custom on the land. On some he must work all Monday the year through for his lord, and three days every week in harvest; and on some lands all days throughout August, and must mow an acre of oats a day, and he shall have his sheaf, which the reeve or lord's bailiff shall give him. He need not pay rent (land-gavel). He ought to have five acres—more if it be the custom of the land—and it is too little if it be less, for his work is often used. He pays hearth-penny on Holy Thursday, as every freeman is bound to do, and he must ward his lord's inland or demesne, if he be summoned so to do, making sea-defence or king's deer-fence and such things as his measure may be, and he pays his church-scot at Martinmass.

“The gebur's or small farmer's rights are divers; in some places they are heavy, in some middling or light. On some land it is so that he must work two days week-work, whatever work he is told off to, the first of each week, the year through, and at harvest three days week-work, and at Candlemass and Easter three. If his horse is being used (for his lord's service), he need not work while his horse is out. He must pay at Michaelmas Day ten pence rent, and at Martinmass Day twenty-three pence and a bushel of barley and two hen-fowls; at Easter a young sheep or two pence, and he shall from Martinmass to Easter lie

at his lord's fold as often as he is required. And from the time when men first plow up to Martinmass he must each week plow one acre, and clean the seed himself in the lord's barn ; moreover, three acres of corn work and two of grass-plowing ; if he need more grass, he must plow according as he is permitted. Of his rent-plowing he must plow two acres and sow it out of his own barn, and pay his hearth-penny ; he must feed a hound in equal share with his fellow, and every small farmer must pay six loaves to the swain or swine-herd when he drives his herd to mast. On the same land whereon this custom holds the small farmer must be given, for stocking his land, two oxen and one cow and six sheep, and seven acres sown on his yardland. But, the first year over, he must pay all the dues that he is bound to. And he is given tools for his work and furniture for his house ; and when he dies, what he leaves goes back to his lord. * * * * In some lands the small farmer must pay honey-rent, on some meat-rent, on some ale-rent."

I can only briefly notice the character of the Anglo-Saxon statutes. The only substantive rules that are at all fully set forth in the dooms of the Saxon kings have to do with offences and wrongs, mostly of a violent kind, and with theft, mostly cattle stealing. Except so far as involved in the law of theft, the law of property is almost entirely left to the region of unwritten custom and local usage.

The law of contract is rudimentary only. Preservation of the peace and punishment of offences was the chief business of the magistrates and the courts. Inasmuch as ownership was usually accompanied by possession, practically possession was or seemed to be of more consequence than title. It was the right of possession that had to be defended ; and undisputed possession was the foundation of title.

There was little trade ; no demand for credit. Our ancestors did all their business in person, and executory contracts were little known. On the other hand,

man-slaying and feuds were constant. A man's life had its price. Full scales of composition or tariffs were established. A freeman's life had a regular value placed upon it, called wergeld, or man payment ; and so for injuries less than death. And composition, if offered, had to be accepted. Private war was lawful only when an adversary refused to do right. The king or the earl might interfere if an adversary was contumacious. Punishments, besides death or banishment, were pecuniary. Imprisonment was only used as a means of temporary security. Some distinctions in the grade of homicide appear even in that early day. It was aggravated if committed in the presence of the king or in breach of the king's peace.

It was punishable by larger fine if committed secretly than if done openly. Murder, or "mordh," the word from which we get murder, at one time meant only killing by poison or witchcraft. An outlaw might be slain without risk, and so might a thief flying from justice. So might an adulterer taken *in flagrante delicto* by the woman's husband, father, brother or son.

I close with a word concerning the statutes which were promulgated by Alfred himself. One cannot read them without being reminded of the laws of Moses. In fact, Alfred's book of laws contains large extracts taken almost literally from the Jewish law. Offences are defined with the utmost particularity. Compensation, or bot, is provided for all possible injuries which one man might receive from another. It is one bot to strike out another's eye, but less if it

remain in the head, although he cannot see with it. There is a bot for striking off a nose, or a tooth; and if a front tooth, the bot is 8s, a canine tooth 4s, a grinder is worth 15s. There is so much for smiting a cheek or cleaving a chin bone, or piercing a wind-pipe, or doing a tongue out of another's head, or for wounding the shoulder so that the joint oil will flow out, or breaking both arm shanks, or striking off a thumb or a nail, or shooting finger, or its nail; another bot for the middlemost finger or its nail, still another for the gold or ring finger or its nail, still another for the little finger or its nail, the bot for which latter is 1s. There is a bot provided for wounds to the lower limbs, the ribs, sinews or tendons. Injuries by dogs are dealt with elaborately, the compensation increasing after the first bite. So injuries by other animals. And so forth.

I quote one doom, because it is peculiarly expressive, showing the minute care which the statutes of the day had of the conduct of men:

“If a man have a spear over his shoulder, and another man stake himself upon it, the law was that he pay the wer, that is, the man's price, without the wite or fine. If he stake himself before his face, let him pay the man ‘wer’ payment. If he be accused of wilfulness in the deed, let him clear himself according to the wite; and with that, let the wite abate. And let this be, if the point be three fingers higher than the hindmost part of the shaft. If they be both on a level, the point and the hindmost part of the shaft, be that without danger.”

Our Anglo-Saxon fathers in the time of Alfred were governed very much as the children of Israel had been governed several thousand years before, by line upon line, precept upon precept. The Anglo-Saxon

world was still in social infancy. The great principles which now regulate men in their relations with one another were little known or understood. The law undertook to govern men as we govern children, not by general rules, but by specific commands and specific prohibitions. It was "Do this"; "do that"; "you mustn't do this"; "you mustn't touch that." Such was law in England then. But out of that England, inspired probably by no one more than by the genius of Alfred the Great have arisen those great and far-reaching principles of government known as the Common Law, upon which rests the best civilization the world has ever known.

ALFRED THE GREAT AS A CHRISTIAN

BY ASA DALTON, D.D.

We have been told what King Alfred was as a statesman and scholar, and it only remains to say a few words of him as a Christian.

Popular accounts describe him as eminently good throughout his life. The truth is, however, that a beautiful boy, the darling of his parents, and very bright, he afterwards regretted that his youth was one of frivolity, in which he failed to improve the opportunities allotted him by his rank. He was not, indeed, the heir apparent, and did not become king till after the death of his brothers.

After this event, he awoke to a sense of the situation and its responsibilities, but not fully even then, till a painful illness chastened his youthful spirits, and was the occasion of turning his thoughts to higher things. Returns of his disorder were frequent, and doubtless had an influence in shaping the seriousness of his aims, and the loftiness of his character. Henceforth till his death, he "strove to live worthily" and so that he would be remembered gratefully by later generations.

Owing to the inroads of the Danes and other causes, the country was in great confusion, and had sunk so low as to learning that south of the Thames there was scarcely a priest who could translate the Latin service books into English. Churches and monasteries had

been destroyed by the Danes, and many of the clergy slain. Consequently, Alfred had to undo the evil, as well as to do the good which was required by this sad state of affairs. He first invited scholars from the Continent, established schools, founded monasteries and convents, which were as natural and fitting in that generation as our institutions now are to us. The education he planned was for all freemen and their children.

When nearly forty years old, he occupied himself with the study of Latin and the translation of Gregory the Great's "Pastoral Rule," Bede's English and Grotius' General History, also the "Consolations of Philosophy" by Boethius.

Thus he laid as broad a foundation for the uplifting of his people as was possible in that age. A high sense of the duty he owed them, seemed to have constrained him to devote all his time, resources, and talents to their improvement. His time he divided into three parts of eight hours each, eight for sleep, eight given to public offices, and eight to works of charity and piety. He distributed his money, on the same principle, in four parts. One quarter he gave to the support of schools, one quarter to the churches, one quarter to the poor, and one quarter to the founding of churches and religious houses.

The institutions of that age differed in many respects from those to which we are accustomed, and King Alfred not only conformed to them, but believed in them. Yet Christian piety was the same in him as in the saints of all ages, and shone as brightly as it

has in any subsequent time. Alfred was great as a soldier and as a statesman, as a scholar not so great, but as a Christian he was the greatest of all, and ought to be called Alfred the Good.

All accounts agree in representing Alfred as wholly devoted to his duties as soldier, statesman, and educator. The real question, however, is, what was the secret of this spirit of service, the mainspring of his constant activity, and consecration to his mission as he saw it. This mission was first to repel invasion, and then to arrange such a settlement of the country as would insure peace and prosperity. He lamented the decline of learning, and consequent prevailing ignorance of all classes, including the heads of church and state. To secure his ends, he made reasonable, even magnanimous conditions for all the vanquished Danes, as well as his own kith and kin. Religion was the wide basis of all and the governing principle. By religion, I mean his personal piety, a hearty recognition and reception of the Christian religion as a guide of life equally for himself and his people.

His was not the coldly calculating policy usually ascribed to kings and their counsellors, but a personal conviction and faith that pure religion is the key of all progress for princes and peoples alike. What he professed he performed, living up to his professions, and so still presenting the highest type of a ruler which our race has known.

He is to the whole race what Washington is to us, more than Charlemagne was to the Franks, very much more than Peter the Great to Russia. The contrast

between Alfred and Peter as men is even greater than the contrast between the civilization of Russia and that of the English-speaking race.

But over Alfred and behind him was a Divine Providence which guided the orderly development of individual men and of the race, a Providence whose purposes ripened with the ages, with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.

“For all the saints, who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confess’d
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever bless’d.

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might,
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight,
Thou, in the darkness drear, the Light of light.

O may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win, with them, the victor’s crown of gold.

O blest communion, fellowship divine !
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine ;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

The golden evening brightens in the west ;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes the rest ;
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the bless’d,

Alleluia.”

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